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BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTICES

The Nature and Purpose of the Measurement of Social Phenomena.

By A. L. BOWLEY. London: P. S. King & Son, 1915. 8vo, pp. viii+241. 3s. 6d.

The formidable name of this book must not be taken too seriously. Mr. Bowley himself hastens to say so in a prefatory note which is pretty nearly an apology for the title-page. Without such a warning the reader might expect to find here a systematic treatise, somewhat in the German manner, profound, abstract, and impersonal. What he does find is a small volume of large print in which a versatile and accomplished statistician, talking of British conditions to a British university audience, discusses practically and in the light of his own experience some of the methods and aims of a comprehensive social survey.

The first part of the book is concerned with the problems of defining a national or social group, for purposes of investigation, and of classifying its members. Taking territorial area and unity of government as bases of primary statistical grouping, the author proceeds to indicate classifications in terms of industrial affiliation and occupation, degrees of economic dependence, social position, and amount of income. The later chapters, introduced by a discussion of the nature of family income, deal with measurements of some economic characteristics of the groups and types of persons which have been differentiated, and lead, by way of the concept of the standard of living, to a review of the criteria of human progress. Despite the rather abstruse nature of many of these topics the book is thoroughly readable. Its brevity, its pleasant lecture style, its skilful epitomizing of statistical rules and principles permit one to read the whole work over at a sitting. Such a reading, however, by no means exhausts the book's usefulness. Much of its compact advice deserves study and reflection, and will be fully appreciated only by the statistician who has already done thinking of his own on subjects such as these.

The closing chapters, devoted not so much to method as to interpretation, will chiefly interest most readers. Mr. Bowley has made a real contribution to the literature of the standard of living. He has touched the subject at only one or two points, it is true; but what he

has written is consistent, incisive, and clarifying. Anyone who has come to realize the looseness of thought and confusion of meanings that pervade most discussions of the standard of living will welcome this discriminating commentary.

Throughout the book it is apparent that Mr. Bowley is discussing not statistical problems at large but the concrete statistical problems he has himself encountered. He is giving some of his statistical reminiscences. This quality of his work, in one sense a limitation, is at the same time perhaps its most interesting feature and even its cardinal merit. For here is a book of statistical experience; and statistical experience is not easy to put into books. Raw data, good and bad, we have in plenty. Of competent treatises on pure statistical theory there are not a few. But to bring together the facts in harmony with the principles we need statistical insight and a sense of statistical values that only experience can originally give, and that only the experienced teacher can impart. Were there some statistical clinic, some *atelier*, where masters of the craft gave themselves over to training others by direct contact and example, the novitiate in statistics would be far more effectual than it now ordinarily is. Unfortunately such training is rarely to be had. Those who serve their apprenticeship in government bureaus too often acquire habits rather than experience, and stiffen in the routine of a rule of thumb. Where competent personal guidance is thus lacking the student falls back on books. Hence it is that such a book as this which Mr. Bowley now gives us has special significance and promise of usefulness. It is no epoch-making achievement; but it represents a more than usually successful attempt to occupy the difficult middle ground of statistical procedure where fact and theory meet in scientific interpretation.

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Some Problems in Market Distribution. By A. W. SHAW. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1915. 12mo, pp. 119. \$1.00.

Much the greater part of this little volume was published under the foregoing title in the *Quarterly Journal of Economics* for August, 1912. The new material is to be found in the first chapter, but even this is familiar to those students who have attended the author's course of lectures. None the less it is satisfactory to have this full and convenient expression of Mr. Shaw's ideas. They are well worth knowing.